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Editorial

EDITORIAL: EXPANDING THE FRAME OF REFERENCE

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Welcome to our Winter 2017 issue of the *CWBR*. This issue's feature content includes a diverse offering that ranges from the lives of women in antebellum of Natchez, Mississippi to military engineering. Though diverse, this issue's offerings challenge the reader to look beyond the conventional frames of historical reference by closely examining the lives of non-elite women, the culture behind military logistics, the global exchange of ideas, and the morality of nineteenth-century decisions makers.

Mark Smith's review of Thomas F. Army Jr.'s *Engineering Victory: How Technology Won the Civil War* praises the book for its examination of a "culture of improvisation" that saturated the North. The antebellum North's commitment to common school reforms and embrace of the lyceum movement, Army argues, made the Union army amiable to a system of "bottom-up technical innovations," which proved essential to the Union's victory.

In Joyce Broussard's *Stepping Lively in Place: The Not-Married, Free Women of Civil-War-Era Natchez, Mississippi* our issue turns from the cultural concerns to social considerations. As reviewer Jean Baker points out, society expected Natchez's unmarried, free women to be dutiful wives above all else. These expectations meant that unmarried women, black or white, needed to operate "with amazing dexterity" if they intended to remain unmarried property holders before and after the Civil War.

Our Civil War Treasures column considers the rich documentary sources left by one antebellum family from Clinton, Louisiana. The Wall Family Papers, as LSU special collection librarians Hans Rasmussen and Meghann Wollitz explain, feature vivid commentary by a southeast Louisiana family who experienced heavy wartime losses, imprisonment, and maintained familial responsibilities under military occupation.

Further expanding the boundaries of historical convention is Vitor Izechkson's *Slavery and War in the Americas: Race, Citizenship, and State Building in the United States and Brazil, 1861-1870*. Though a number of scholars have previously examined connections between the U.S. and Brazil, reviewer Enrico Dal Lago notes, Izechkson's analysis is path breaking for its chronological emphasis. Few scholars have devoted book length studies to the western hemisphere's dominant slave powers. In closely comparing these slaveholding powers in wartime, Izechkson turns conventional wisdom on its head by recognizing that the American Civil War wrought incredible social change through emancipation and the Confederacy's defeat. Brazil's War of the Triple Alliance, however, brought no such changes for that country's enslaved. These conclusions, Dal Lago points out, enable Izechkson to convincingly paint the American Civil War as a total war because of the social changes it wrought.

Brazil, slavery, and war all appear in Matthew Karp's *This Vast Slaveholding Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy*. In my interview with Dr. Karp we discuss how U.S. slaveholders secured their interests in human property through their long command over U.S. foreign policy. Threatened by Britain's anti-slavery policy, U.S. slaveholders looked beyond their nation's border to secure and justify slavery. American slaveholders found scholarly and political justifications for slavery through close engagement with Europe's intellectuals and that continent's growing use of colonial labor. As Dr. William J. Cooper, who reviews *This Vast Southern Empire* this issue, finds that one of the book's most important features is its convincing portrait of slaveholders as cosmopolitan, but conservative men who preferred foreign policy to filibustering.

Our resident Lincoln expert, Frank J. Williams, tackles Thomas L. Carson's *Lincoln's Ethics*. As Mr. Williams makes clear, Carson's background as a philosopher and expert on moral relativism is the book's cardinal virtue. Carson's professional background infuses familiar debates about Lincoln's thoughts on slavery and race with new energy.

Inspired by a panel (titled: The Perennial Problem of Poor Whites during the Civil War Era) at the 2016 Southern Historical Association's conference, and the lively discussion that followed, this issue begins a new, and hopefully ongoing series, about poor southern whites in the generations before and after the Civil War. Gary Edwards begins this series with an essay about the political identity of poor whites during Reconstruction.

